



ANONYMOUSLY SUBMITTED AND FORMATTED AT THE CENTER
OF CREATIVE NOTHING AT THE
BERKMAN SCHOOL OF ANARCHY

JUST WRITE ON WALLS:

reasserting our autonomy through graffiti



A TRANS PERSPECTIVE ON GRAFFITI
AND VANDALISM AS RESISTANCE

In crime the egoist has up to now
asserted himself and mocked the
sacred; the breaking with the
sacred, or rather of the sacred,
can become general.
- Max Stirner



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References and inspirations

Flower Bomb. “No Hope, No Future: Let the Adventures Begin!” Warzone Distro, 2019

Anonymous “gender, power, and public space critical mass as trans method”

Introduction

Graffiti is as old as symbolic representation itself, from the petroglyphs carved by indigenous people of so-called North America to the cave paintings of France. We often use Graffiti to spread messages and ideas to the masses. Leaving your mark on your environment is an essential part of the human experience and can have some deep meaning or just to say, “I was here.” The current state of our world leaves us constantly under the thumb of the authority, surveillance and social expectations of the state and civilization. Our cities are becoming soulless places not for those who live in them but for the wealthy suburbanites who commute into the city. Real estate corporations build more high-end housing, not even really designed to be lived in, but as an unused asset for the wealthy. In this environment it is hard to really feel like an individual entity instead of just a cog in the machine. One way we can escape this is by tagging the walls, utility boxes, dumpsters, and any other parts of our environment kept from us.

Nihilism

When you start doing graffiti you will soon see that you can never escape The Buff. Your creative vandalism will always get scrubbed off walls, painted over or any other way of covering it up but this does not stop you from doing it. Graffiti is also heavily criminalized in many parts of the world, putting pressure on you just for writing your name on a wall. All these factors should put people off from graffiti, but it does not. I do not think of graffiti as being the greatest form of resistance against the state and civilization, but it is something you can do now

and that is all you need. The inescapable nature of the state, capitalism, and civilization inspires dread in some and to others inspires them to think beyond and of some revolution that will fix all of society's ills. You can fall into either of these traps if it makes you feel better, but you can use the inescapable nature of our oppression to fuel your resistance.

Gender

Being a trans person, you notice the way in which you change the spaces around you. You always get the feeling that you are not welcome in public space whether it be in bathrooms or even just existing on the streets. To me I use my graffiti to control the space around me that I am made to not feel welcome in. I view Graffiti as ungended even though it is heavily male dominated. Graffiti writers are only known by their names, style, and identity that they express within their communities. This connects to the trans experience of having a chosen name and to many only having it known in their queer community. I try to conceal my transness except in spaces where I feel safe to express my identity this experience is also a feeling I have had while writing graffiti having to conceal my expression except when I release it onto the walls, mailboxes, and whatever else I want to write on. Being seen as queer in public vandalizes your environment so graffiti is a way to change the environment that you can control.

Individualism

Traditional forms of art are often gatekept by some authority that decides if it is worthy of being seen. It is unlikely to get your painting into art galleries unless you conform to what people considered the true form of art, usually conforming to some expectations of style or

this could also be a different spot than where you blocked up, you should try and not leave your house or somewhere you are known to hang out in bloc. This is always a careful balance between being anonymous and not looking sketchy AF. Wearing a hoodie with a hood up and a balaclava will keep you hidden but unless it is cold out you are going to stand out. The most important things to cover are your hair and any visible tattoos. If you can cover your face without looking sketchy, medical masks usually do not stick out and if it is cold balaclavas are even better. Hopefully, this is obvious but do not tag in front of people you do not trust if you see any car coming stop tagging and maybe walk away. If you are tagging with a friend, I would come up with words that signal stop, stop and walk away and run. This has saved me many times and not using it in time has led to some close calls (always wear shoes you can run in).

Conclusion

I hope this zine will give you the push or inspiration to start doing some constructive vandalism with your friends. It might not have some greater purpose but it sure is fun and you can do it right now. We can reclaim the space that has been stolen from us, serving as a means for individuals to leave their mark on the world. It represents the intrinsic human desire to assert one's presence and individuality in the face of authority, surveillance, and societal expectations. So, get out there and get your tags, throws, and pieces up.

also just pick a name that sounds cool. With all graffiti, keeping it simple will help you. Try to minimize the number of letters in your name, my recommendation is under 6 letters. Once you have your name picked out you need to figure out how you want to write it. Starting out you will not have a lot of skill so to start I would just write it out in normal letters. Some people in the graffiti community believe you need to practice and get your tag perfect before you put it up anywhere, but these people are nerds, and you should ignore them. Getting up is more important than being skilled. You could be the best writer in the world, but if you are not up, no one cares. This is not to say practice is not important, I think repetitively writing your tag in notebooks is the easiest way to get better. As you start writing your tag more you should be able to find the flow of it and style almost comes naturally.

How to get away with it

Now that you have your tools and something to write all you need is the willingness to do it. Like with any other illegal act there are several things you can do to minimize your chances of getting caught. Before you start writing you should pick a target whether it be a specific wall or just a general area. Knowing an area's general vibe is important if you want to be safe walk around the area on different nights, you are not tagging to see how busy the streets are and how many cops are usually in the area on certain days. Now that you have your target and something to write you just need to take some precautions. You can always do this alone but bringing a friend to watch out for you will make tagging easier since you do not have to keep looking out for yourself and you can just focus on the tag. Now that you have a friend or do not you should conceal yourself or bloc up. You should find a hidden spot to bloc up and debloc

message. Even art that claims to be experimental or subversive often still conforms to expectations of what subversive experimental art should be. Graffiti, even graffiti that uses already existing styles, is a greater expression of individuality than forms of art gatekept by expectations of what it should be or say. Doing graffiti even if only using basic letters you will develop your own style unique to you. I do not consider myself skilled at graffiti or art in general, but this does not deter me. Graffiti has no real authority. There are people who will critique what you write or even try and cover your work, but this does not prevent it from being seen like traditional art would. The only thing preventing you from expressing exactly what you want in graffiti is the tools you have and your willingness to do it.

Committing crimes for fun

As I am sure you are aware graffiti is illegal in basically every part of the world but also if you are reading this you do not care. Since I have started doing graffiti, I have been lucky to only have one encounter with the police in which I got away. This encounter for some would discourage them from continuing but it only encouraged me to continue my actions and to do even more. The authority of the state can seem total, and, in some cases, it is but by disobeying their authority and general antagonism we can disrupt their authority. Graffiti writers have almost always stolen or “racked” their art supplies. This is another way that graffiti can help us to become more autonomous. Our economic situation gets worse by the day as prices rise and wages lower many of us cannot afford the basic things, we need much less so-called unnecessary things like art supplies. The things that bring us joy or are important to us should not be gatekept behind needing to pay for it or especially in the case of graffiti supplies often

kept to only those of a certain age. Even if small to the point of being irrelevant to large corporate stores, stealing does hurt them and their profits.

Anti commodification action

To me one of the most beautiful things about graffiti is the simple fact that it is un commodified and cannot really be bought or sold. Since graffiti is done on other people's things, you cannot trade it like with other art. A tag on a wall is not owned by anyone and makes itself part of the environment. Other more traditional forms of art are often judged by how much they were sold for before the art itself is judged. There have been attempts to buy and sell graffiti in traditional art markets, the most well-known of these is the works of Banksy. His prints, whether they be on walls or canvas, are highly prized by art collectors and have led to financial success for the artist. To me this is an affront to graffiti and the reason we do it. Banksy has political messages, but they are often shallow and lacking in substance. He may claim to dislike the art world by doing stunts like destroying his art but really this does nothing but create more value for the piece and allow him to profit even more.

The City

The environments we live in are filled with space for us to exist in but are kept from us either from the idea of private property or public spaces really being designed for us not really exist in them. You can see this in simple things like benches having arm rests in the middle not to add comfort to those sitting but to prevent those with nowhere else from laying down or businesses trying to keep kids away although it may be their only place to hang out. And increasingly our

neighborhoods become soulless gentrified non places, we need to use graffiti to show that people still inhabit these places and that gentrifiers are not welcome in our neighborhoods. Neighborhoods that have been heavily gentrified are the most active in buffing graffiti since it will harm their precious property values. To me graffiti is one the best ways to reclaim the space that has been stolen from us. Tagging a wall in a space you do not belong, even for just for the time it takes you to tag it and admire your work reclaims the space as your own.

What you need to start

Getting your start in writing graffiti can seem daunting but it should not be graffiti is quite simple. You only need a few things to start something to write with and on. You can use a multitude of things to write with but the 2 items you should get first are markers and cans. Getting these items can be done in a multitude of ways but my recommended method to get these is racking them. If you have never racked art supplies before it may seem scary but there are many ways to make it easier. Picking your target is the first step my preferred stores to gather supplies is at craft stores. These stores usually have low security and few workers. Try to find stores that keep the paint and markers unlocked. Hardware stores are also good targets for racking, but these usually have worse paint for graffiti than the craft stores. After you have your writing implements, you can think about what you want to write. You can either just write some political message or just something you think will make someone laugh or both. But to me the most fun thing to do with graffiti is to pick a name and get up as much as you can. Picking a name can be hard since you need to pick something unique and easy to write. I try to pick names that have some personal meaning to me. I write the name TRANY, but you could